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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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EXPLORATORY FISHING CONCLUDED FOR 1953 SEASON ON GULF OF MAINE BLUEFIN TUNA

The Schooner Marjorie Parker, under charter since July 15 to the Fish and Wildlife Service, completed the final cruise of the 1953 Gulf of Maine bluefin tuna exploration when the vessel docked at Portland, Maine, on October 14, Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay was advised today.

During the latter part of September, exploratory fishing and gear testing were conducted off the southeastern coast of Nova Scotia, on Browns Bank and in the "Gully" between Browns and Georges Banks. Only six bluefin tuna were captured on the long lines, and one tuna was caught on the surface trolling gear. No schooling tuna were sighted in this area.

In early October operations were carried out in the vicinity of Cashe Ledge, from 60 to 70 miles southeast of Portland Lightship, and in the South Channel 40 miles east-southeast of Pollock Rip Lightship. No tuna schools were observed near Cashe Ledge, and fishing results were negative.

On the morning of October 10, within a space of three hours, four schools of tuna were sighted in South Channel. The fish were traveling fast and appeared to be feeding on small herring and other unidentified species which were observed in the water. Long-line sets failed to produce tuna, although the gear was set directly in the path of the schooling fish. One school, estimated to comprise about 100 tuna in the 30-45 pound class, was chummed alongside the boat, but hand-line fishing was unsuccessful. Adverse weather conditions prevented fishing in this area after October 11.

Although the tuna catches this year were generally poor and far below those of the first two year's exploration, the service Director John L. Farley pointed out it does not necessarily mean that the run of New England tuna was smaller than average. This year's exploration was delayed until July 15, due to budget uncertainties, and a large early run of tuna was completely missed. Most of the fishing was planned to explore the offshore waters near the edge of the Gulf stream, and little effort was devoted to the inshore areas where the presence of tuna has been well established.

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